

A WEEK IN A CONVENT RETREAT.

A Journal Woman's Very Interesting Visit to the Society Girls Who Are Keeping Lent Religiously.

I have spent a week in the Convent of St. Regis, overlooking the Hudson at One Hundred and Forty-first street. Here is a beautiful retreat, conducted by a French Sisterhood, where world-weary and unhappy New York society young women go during Lent for a period of rest and spiritual companionship, far from the noisy strife and poignant cares of the city, yet within sight of it.

On a broad stretch of woodland sloping down to the banks of the Hudson, tall, gaunt poplars, fruitful only of icicles and snow-laden limbs, the settled, peaceful calm of a winter's evening at sunset, and in the midst of it all, its tall, gray poplars pointing heavenward, and the emblem of the cross before it, stands the Convent of St. Regis.

This little French convent, presided over by twenty Sisters of the Order, carries on the work of converting souls to the Catholic faith and offering a retreat for women of all creeds and nationalities.

The retreat may be made for a period of three days, five days or eight days, with or without charge for board, according to the limitations of one's purse; with religious instruction or without, as one prefers, and with intercourse with the Sisters and others in retreat or in the solitude of one's own room.

It was twilight Saturday night when I reached the little wooden door outside the convent grounds and rapped with the iron knocker. There were no lights streaking through the window blinds, and the whole place seemed wrapped in repose. Could they retire at 8? I wondered.

Then I heard a crunching of the gravel inside and the clink of keys; the little door was opened, and Sister Josephine drew me inside, patting my hands as we walked up toward the house.

"You are cold, valise cold," she said, in broken English; "but inside here is warmth."

Then we went in, and the soft lights and warm air greeted us, and I was as glad as Sister Josephine that I had reached my destination.

"Welcome, ma chere; you are valise welcome," she added, making me comfortable before a big open fire and removing my wraps; "and now I will go to the Reverend Mother and tell her you are here, and see that your room is ready."

So Sister Josephine glided away, the soft cashmere draperies making no rustle, the velvet shoes making no noise, the only sound she made being the clink of the metal crucifix and beads at her side. I leaned back and put my feet near the logs, listening as they crackled in merry defiance of the holy stillness, and watching the myriads of dancing blue flames to which they gave birth.

SISTER LA FLANGE.

But more often I watched the tall, beautiful girl who often in the black robes of the order, whom I afterward learned was Sister La Flange. Truly, it must be indeed a beautiful face that still retains its loveliness, framed in those trying white bands, with flaring, fluted collar and draperies of black. Sister La Flange was preparing the altar robes for the morrow's mass, and her devoted attention to the task gave me ample opportunity to admire the long, slender hands and to study the aristocratic features.

"What a dream she would be in a Worth gown and a Mire, Fannie hat, and with what dainty grace those slender hands might have poured some man's coffee!" were my thoughts.

Mother La Chappelle interrupted when she entered, and invited me to go up to my room. A sweet-faced, motherly woman in this Reverend Mother, and as we reached a room on the first floor she pushed the door open and said, while her kindly brown eyes beamed upon me: "This is your new home, and we hope you will stay with us a long while. There are many young girls here such as you, whom the demands and emptiness of society have made tired in body and spirit; but here you will find rest."

IN A CONVENT BEDROOM.

Then Mother Chappelle closed the door and was gone, and I looked about my "new home." Truly it was a surprise! I laughed softly to myself as I thought of my old-fashioned room, which closely allied the comforts of prisons and convents. The room was large, with a great, downy bed on one side covered with bemottled tapestry of snowy white. There were easy chairs and rockers, and tables with daintily embroidered covers, a chiffoier and dress-table, the mirror of which was draped with dotted swiss, caught back with light ribbon.

The window at one side faced a beautiful stretch of landscape, and the two in front overlooked the garden and hothouses, and, beyond, the Hudson River. Gas logs were under the mantel, and the soft, white picket curtains, caught back with blue, imparted the finishing touch of homeliness.

Surely nothing could be sweeter, daintier, more refreshing than the surroundings as I found them; nothing, perhaps, except the sound of the dinner bell, which rang shortly after, followed by a light tap on the door.

SOCIETY GIRLS IN RETREAT.

"Dinner is ready, mademoiselle," said the woman, who was Sister Francis, the cook, "and eat two meins since ze bell rang."

I smiled at the implied reproach for tardiness, which evidently was among the moral aims at St. Regis, and I followed Sister Francis down to dinner. Ten girls were seated about the big round tables, waiting impatiently for the new guest, and the beautiful Sister La Flange was just beginning to read a story on Christopher

Columbus—a treat which the girls, I fear, do not fully appreciate, as the reading is intended as a cure for conversation.

Among the guests were at least four faces that were familiar to me. Two were girls of the inner circle of New York's swiftness, one a Western girl, and the other a New Yorker, both of whom are supposed by their friends to be spending a few days at a country place. The other two faces were those of young Jewesses, who are of prominent Jewish families of New York, and who were recently converted to the Catholic faith. Their friends believe they are visiting relatives in Cincinnati. The fact is that the two young women now live at the convent, as their family are bitterly opposed to their assumption of a new faith.

EARLY MORNING CHIMES.

Early in the morning I realized it must, indeed, be early, for it was still quite dark. I was awakened by the chiming of bells, and judged from the noise that every one was up and preparing for mass. Sister Broadhurst had promised to have me called at 6:30, but, supposing she had forgotten me, I jumped out of bed on to the cold floor just outside the rug. Then I realized

low over the forehead and let the rest fall over my shoulders. The effect was most weird and awful, and I made up my mind I would have to ignore at least one of the recommendations. So I closed my eyes, pulled off the veil and looked in a bureau drawer, as Sister Broadhurst, the only Englishwoman among them, entered the room.

"You needn't wear it," she said, with a little laugh. "Most of the girls do object to veils, and I suppose they are a bit grouchy at first. Then the little English Sister with the china blue eyes sat down and chatted with me, told me about her own sweet and holy life and her never-ending joy in having sacrificed the world, and of the perfect rest and peace I must derive from my retreat. Then the bells began to chime with a strange, far-away sweetness over the grounds.

"What is that?" I asked, as we stopped to listen.

"There are ringing us to the chapel for offers for departed Sisters," replied Sister Broadhurst. "We do die, you know," and with a pleasant laugh and a "Good-night" which included advice to retire and get a long night's rest, she left me to descend to the chapel. I was not loathe to follow her advice, for I was tired, and I knew I could sleep in the midst of these peaceful surroundings. Before 9 o'clock I put out my lights and pulled back the soft chintz curtains.

It was a beautiful night. The moon shone on every corner of the gardens, glistened like diamonds upon the fountains, and making soft, weird shadows where the trees grew thickest; and beyond, at the foot of the slope, it lighted up the silent river, the beautiful beyond description in its great, calm grandeur, so like those happy, unselfish souls below stairs. For a moment I stood and studied Nature, the greatest, broadest, fullest religion of all. Then the bells chimed again, a quaint, melodious chirp and before their echoes died away I had sunk in the downy pillows and to sleep.

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be better for you to go into the chapel, but if you prefer, go out into the garden; but whatever your thoughts drift to the world, you must always bring them back to that one object, the cross.

I strolled out and settled down in a big easy chair on the veranda, where the two small girls were sitting, evidently lost in thought. One is a beautiful brunette, and her half-closed eyes looked like a gazelle's as she sat with her head thrown back on her hands, which were clasped behind her. Was she thinking of prayers and retreats, or was it Jack? I wondered.

HER FRANK CONFESSION.

Presently she broke out impatiently: "I say, Virginia, this sort of thing's playing havoc with my nerves. Why, there isn't a thing that doesn't look there, now; even those old dead lilac vines on the porch are trailing upward to the cross." As I approached, both girls turned around.

"It was nothing," I said, laughing; "nothing but a sort of fellow-feeling. I have the same meditation. How do you like it?"

"Splendid," said the brunette; "we've been here three days, and I feel like a new woman."

"And I begin to feel like my old self," said the Western girl; "but I'm beginning to show symptoms of religious cold."

"Very," said the brunette, strolling at full length on one of the divans—"bored to death."

"I'm not," said the Western girl, "I think it's great. We're going over for the London season, and I'll be in great shape."

Then she told me her last meditation was on "The Ascension," and, sitting the action to the veranda, she placed her large white hands upon the rafters and swung herself up to the hayloft.

"I'm ready for a nap," she called down as I closed the barn door, and I went to the house and followed her example.

At 4:30 was a benediction service, which none of us attended, our naps being then in a fine state of progress; at 6 o'clock dinner, after which we stood out on the veranda and watched a fine moonrise; then the bells chimed and we peeped through the chapel windows and watched the prayer offering for departed sisters, bade each other good-night and retired to our rooms, where I read a few stories of Hawthorne and wrote a couple of letters before the bells rang for 9 o'clock and the lights were turned out.

"I'm morally certain of it," I replied, "Mother Chappelle would not like it if she heard you conversing together out here. Perhaps you would prefer to dash your meditations in the chapel?" We took the hint and went in, though not to the chapel, for the hour for meditation had elapsed. As we parted to go to our rooms the brunette whispered softly: "Really, don't you believe there's a romance there about Jack?" I replied,

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EARLY RISING AS A CAUSE OF INSANITY.

Startling Theory Which Explains Why Lunatic Asylums Are Recruited Largely from the Farms.

Early rising is one of the most prolific causes of insanity.

The authority for this astonishing statement is no less a person than Dr. Selden H. Talcott, Medical Superintendent of the Homeopathic State Insane Asylum at Middletown, N. Y.

Dr. Talcott is one of the most eminent specialists in insanity in the world. For nineteen years he has been at the head of the Middletown asylum, which, under his administration, has become probably the finest and most complete institution of the kind in the country.

His statement that early rising produces mental wrecking is based on close study and observation extending over a period of twenty years' active practice. He reached this conclusion some time ago, but has just made it public.

"After the habit of waking and rising at 5 o'clock has been established, the mind, under the injunctions and threats of unwisely ambitious parents, it is exceedingly difficult in later life to overcome it. Even when we are privileged to sleep later in the morning, through some delectable turn in the wheel of fortune, those of us who have been the victims of early rising in youth, are apt to awaken at 4 or 5 o'clock and lie awake for a long time before we can again woo the gentle goddess of sleep."

"Some farmers' boys have saved themselves from early rising, and likewise from insanity, by going into the ministry, or by entering the medical profession.

"A true philosophy of life will be exercised when the young are permitted to sleep to the full extent of necessity, and ability during the growing years of life."

DR. TALCOTT'S PROOF.

In an interview with a reporter for the Sunday Journal, Dr. Talcott went more extensively into the matter, analyzing the facts and figures as they were demonstrated by his experience as Superintendent of the Middletown asylum.

"The more we study and the more we investigate the causes of mental disorder," he said, "the more thoroughly we are convinced of the fact that too early rising is a cause not only of mental aberration, but likewise of premature mental decay. Too early rising likewise checks the growth of mental powers in the young."

"I hope the Journal will write and preach with all the strength it has against this grave danger."

"While the vast majority of those who have made comments upon this theory that early rising is dangerous have acquiesced in the assertion, a few have sought to dispute the claim that there is more insanity among the rural population than among those who live in cities. I therefore caused an investigation to be made of the population at this hospital on the first of January, 1896."

"We had on that date 556 men and 567 women, a total of 1123.

"Of these, 270 men and 253 women came from cities having a population of 7,000 or more, and the balance—286 men and 372 women—came from the small towns and the rural districts."

"According to the census of this State in 1890, there were 3,418,981 inhabitants in the cities and 2,548,879 in the rural districts. With these figures to base our calculations on the proportion of insane in this hospital from city and country is as follows:

"From cities, 1 to every 6,512 inhabitants.

"From the country, 1 to every 4,262 inhabitants."

"According to the showing made by this research, we find that insanity in the rural districts is more prevalent by about 50 per cent than in the cities."

"It seems to me that," continued the doctor, "every thinking person can easily understand why insanity is likely to follow in a case where the victim rises each morning from his bed before he is fully and thoroughly recuperated from the exhausting and anxieties of the previous day. Every time he does this he makes an inroad upon his physical and mental capital, until at last he finds himself a worn out, exhausted and bankrupt spendthrift."

LATE RISERS ARE NOT LUNATICS.

"Every one knows at what unreasonable hours people in the country rise and the connection between this and the large percentage of insanity among them is not hard to trace. If any doubt remains as to the dangers of too early rising, the statistics of professional men who go mad will easily dispel it. The percentage of professional men among our patients is almost infinitesimal, and it is the same in other institutions."

Why is this?

"The explanation is at hand. Professional men, almost without exception, get up late in the morning, whereas our manual laborers, in city and country, all follow their beds long before they should. Generally in winter they rise before daybreak.

"A radical change should be wrought in our industrial system," Dr. Talcott concluded, "so that our working men and women would not be compelled to get up as they do to-day, before they have had a decent night's rest. The early morning hours, when everything is still, are peculiarly fitted for sleep, and it is a gross violation of all the laws of nature to tear human brains out of the sound rest they enjoy at this time."

ALUMINUM'S USEFULNESS.

It is Estimated the Total Output of the Metal the Ensuing Year Will Be Fully 3,000,000 Pounds.

One of the most marvelous facts of the present is the wide field of usefulness of aluminum. So varied are the uses to which it can be put that it is estimated the output the coming year will be fully 3,000,000 pounds, an average of 10,000 pounds a day.

In 1894 there was practically but one aluminum reduction works in the country, located at Pittsburgh, and the output for that year was 550,000 pounds. In 1895 this was increased to 850,000 pounds, and now that the plant has been removed to the hydraulic power possibilities of Niagara the output will reach the output will reach 3,000,000 pounds.

In addition to this there is claimed for the plant just reaching completion at Niagara Falls, N. Y., a daily capacity of 20,000 pounds. This plant is described as consisting of one smelting furnace with a capacity of 100 tons of clay daily; one reducing and refining furnace of ten tons daily capacity of bauxite ore. From the slag left from the process of making aluminum is made a remarkable product known as mineral wool, which is used for cement plant, and in the manufacture of storage tanks, etc.

The most recent practical use for aluminum that will, no doubt, largely increase the demand for the metal, is its special adaptability for the powder chamber of cartridges. Anything that will reduce the weight of a soldier's ammunition must become popular with military authorities. The saving in weight with the new cartridges is 25 per cent, enabling a soldier to carry 25 per cent additional pounds of ammunition.

Another use is in the making of oil cups for crank pins of high-speed locomotives. Oil cups of copper are frequently broken by the tremendous centrifugal force developed as they are whirled about. This danger is lessened with aluminum, which is two-thirds lighter than copper.



New York Society Girls in a Convent Retreat During Lent.